

Welcome to the National Trading Standards (NTS) Scam Marshal Newsletter: February 2022

Total Scam Marshals across the UK: 2,121



**NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS**
Scams Team

Romance Scams Surge Expected



As we approach Valentine's Day, family members of online daters are being urged to help protect their relatives from becoming a victim of romance fraud.

New figures show that almost £92 million has been lost through dating scams this year alone.

Daters who strike up online relationships between Christmas and Valentine's Day tend to be the most susceptible to romance fraud, with a spike of 901 reports recorded by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) in March 2021.

According to Action Fraud data, this time of year is the highest in terms of reports with a peak in May as the criminals have had time to groom their victims. There was £14.6 million of reported losses in May last year alone.

Don't keep your online relationship secret, always talk to a trusted friend or family member, they will have your best interests at heart. Criminals will try and move people away from the dating site to a standard messaging service such as WhatsApp. If you spot a suspicious profile, report it to the website that you are using.

Criminals are impersonating 'Which?'



Fake Santander texts

Another month, another scam text message in circulation. This time, one that claims to be from Santander suggesting new direct debits have been set up and attempts to trick people into clicking potentially harmful links.

If you receive a suspicious text, forward it to 7726, this reports it to your telephone operator.

Investment scam emails not from 'Which?'

Criminals are impersonating 'Which?' to sell sham investments online. This is attempted through a bogus email which directs potential victims to a fraudulent website that misuses the Which? logo and copyright to appear legitimate. Do not click on any of its links or follow its instructions – neither these emails nor the website they link to have anything to do with 'Which?'. Instead, please forward suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk.

Reporting fraud to your bank or payment provider

If you've lost money to a scam and you paid with a credit or debit card, or sent money through an account transaction, tell your bank or payment provider as soon as possible. You may be entitled to some reimbursement.

To learn more about scams, visit www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk

We hope to be able to begin sending out our mailbags more regularly in the coming months. However, please do continue to send any scam mail to our freepost address: **NTSST, FREEPOST, MAIL MARSHALS**

So close to 1 million Friends Against Scams . . .

Number Of Friends Against Scams

9 1 2 7 6 9



The National Trading Standards Scams Team's awareness initiative Friends Against Scams is fast approaching its one million Friends target! Friends Against Scams is designed to inspire action, highlight the scale of the problem, change the perceptions of why people fall for scams and make scams a community, regional and national topic.

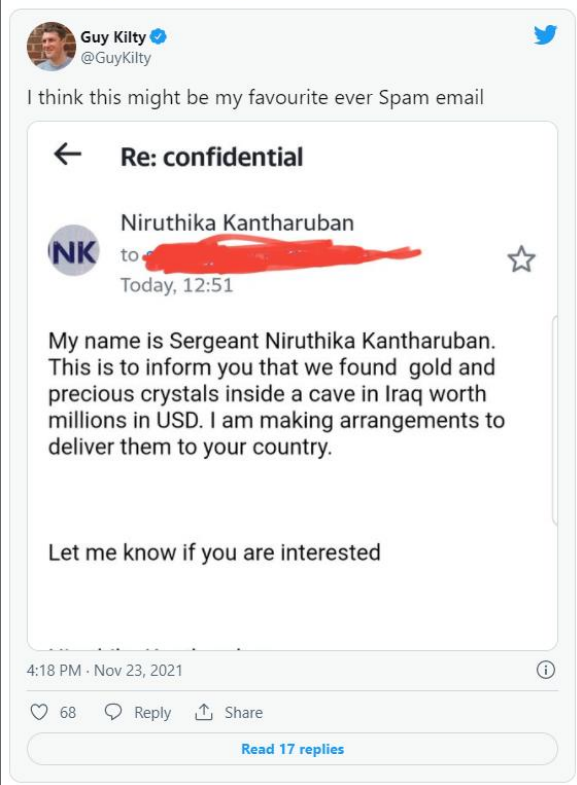
By attending a Friends Against Scams awareness session or completing the online learning, anyone can learn about the different types of scams and how to spot and support a victim. With increased knowledge and awareness, people can make scams part of everyday conversation with their family, friends, and neighbours, which will enable them to protect themselves and others. To find out more, please visit www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk.

Strangest Scams of 2020 Identified

'Which?' Have produced an article which can be found on their website detailing the strangest scams of 2021.

Below is an image of an example of one of the email scams identified. To view more please visit the 'Which?' website.

The Iraqi cave of gold



New Scam Identified

People in the UK are being targeted with a new type of mail scam which would traditionally be committed online via email.

This scam's tactic is to instil a sense of fear, worry and anxiety by stating that your computer has been used to access highly illegal content. They claim to be from the department of justice in the UK and send a very official looking letter.

This letter states that you need to pay a large amount of money (the example we have seen stated £580.00) within ten working days by going to a website where you can put your payment details in. It states that this means that no proceeding will be instituted against you and that failure to pay will lead to legal action. It also states that if you are found guilty you can be:

- Sentenced to up to ten years in prison
- Deported from the UK by the Home Office
- You will no longer be a British resident

It contains personal information such as your address and telephone number. This is a scam which looks very authentic but does contain some spelling mistakes.

Please help raise awareness of this scam by talking to friends, family and neighbours and reporting any instances you might see to us using the Freepost address and Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040**

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